

CAMPAIGNING FOR AMERICA'S ELITE UNDERGRADUATES

BY

COLONEL JOHN M. WENDEL
United States Army

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CAMPAIGNING FOR AMERICA'S ELITE UNDERGRADUATES

by

Colonel John M. Wendel
United States Army

Mr. Robert Riffle
Program Adviser
The University of Texas at Austin

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

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This paper examines the primary forces in play that have contributed to the current situation. The government, Army and academia have been unacceptably

complacent in allowing the narrowing of the military base. Instead of fighting for the very best and brightest students, the Army has sponsored the expansive migration of Army ROTC programs away from urban centers in the Northeast to more rural schools predominantly in the South and Southwest. Due to overwhelming external pressures, the Army has taken the path of least resistance in order to consistently meet accession goals within the limitations of finite resources.

Specific recommendations are offered to the Army's senior leadership for recruiting and retaining significantly more students from America's top-tier universities. As our nation's public support for the military warms, the time may be opportune for the Army to take more aggressive steps in recruiting America's best and brightest students.

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CAMPAIGNING FOR AMERICA'S ELITE UNDERGRADUATES

"When those who benefit most from living in a country contribute the least to its defense, and those who benefit least are asked to pay the ultimate price, something happens to the soul of that country."

Kathryn Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer

America's elite universities are insufficiently represented in the ranks of the Army officer corps. The growing, asymmetric relationship between the US military and its citizenry is increasingly reflected at our most prestigious institutions of higher learning and in the leadership ranks across our Armed Forces. The Army, government, and academia have been unacceptably complacent allowing the near-term forces and strain of institutional culture, social dynamics and short-sighted economics determine the composition of the incoming class of lieutenants.

The post 9/11 Army is profoundly transforming during the ongoing Global War on Terrorism to decisively respond to a complex array of asymmetric and nontraditional threats. The Army's leadership must continue to evolve as it will undoubtedly face increasingly uncertain operational and strategic environments. Within this context, the Army would be best served to take all necessary steps to attract more graduates of elite universities as a high pay-off, long-term, strategic investment in its own health and vitality. Likewise, top-tier schools that support these initiatives would benefit by expanding opportunities to imprint their institutional culture and values on future military officers to best serve the needs of a nation faced with a more complex and menacing global threat than it has ever faced. This work examines the primary forces in play that have contributed to the current situation and offers general recommendations for change.

Current global security demands are so severe that they have already stretched the all-volunteer force further than it has been stretched since the end of the draft in 1973. Short of reinstating the draft, this country's leadership (White House, Congress and Defense Department) must collectively devise and support a strategy designed to sustain the all-volunteer force as a viable option for the 21st century. It is time for a national call to service targeted at the youth from all segments of society. "Service in our nation's armed forces is no longer a common experience. A disproportionate number of the poor and members of minority groups make up the enlisted ranks of the military, while the most privileged Americans are underrepresented or

absent” (Rangel). One of the most important features of any plan aimed at instilling a shared sense of service and sacrifice in America will include the sons and daughters of the privileged class. Increasing recruiting yields at America’s most elite universities might be the most concrete and meaningful way to begin working toward this important goal.

The pervasive threat of transnational terrorism has dramatically increased the level of risk and complexity in the future global security environment, demanding that military leaders possess a new type of adaptive and creative intelligence. Military operations increasingly require the seamless integration of many non-kinetic measures that heretofore have not been considered principal components of America’s war-fighting arsenal. Military leaders are now learning to effectively leverage an expansive array of interagency and intergovernmental resources to accomplish the mission of national reconstruction in Iraq. According to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, "All these so-called 'nontraditional' capabilities have moved into the mainstream of military thinking, planning and strategy – where they must stay" (Tyson, 1). So how is the Army to go about developing the next generation of general officers for the rapidly changing operational and strategic environments?

Currently, the Army’s senior leadership is taking inventory and pausing for fundamental introspection to address emergent challenges of leader education, development and retention during the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These conflicts have spawned the type of turbulence that comes with prolonged personal and professional strain within any given institution. Junior officers are leaving the service at alarming rates, citing “burn-out” from the current war and a general lack of trust in the Army’s leadership. “Many officers (interviewed) said that a crisis of leadership extended to serious questions about the top generals' commitment to sustain a seasoned officer corps that was being deployed on repeated tours to the long-term counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan” (Shanker). Other junior and midlevel officers with combat experience believe “the Army's current leadership lacks a hands-on understanding of today's conflicts and has not listened to feedback from younger personnel” (Tyson 1). Necessity has driven a top-down review of the current promotion system to reward those skilled in counterinsurgency warfare. In the mean time, the Army has tendered cash bonuses (recently \$35,000 for captains) to retain junior and midlevel officers otherwise inclined to leave the ranks. The Army is examining and evaluating high pay-off investments in the long-term health and vitality of its officer corps with a new lens. As a result, the opportunity may

never be better to further expand this important dialogue to include revised strategies for recruiting the next generation of Army leaders.

“The most powerful tool any soldier carries is not his weapon but his mind.”

General David Petraeus, Commander, Multi-National Force – Iraq

"Dave Petraeus in many ways is viewed as the archetype of what this new generation of senior leader is all about," according to retired Major General Bob Scales, "(he is) a guy...who understands information operations, who can be effective on Capitol Hill, who can communicate with Iraqis, who understands the value of original thought, who has the ability through the power of his intellect to lead people to change" (Tyson 2). In an unprecedented move, the Army temporarily pulled General David Petraeus from his wartime command responsibilities in Iraq to personally oversee this year's promotion board for the Army's next lot of rising general officers. General Petraeus, who holds a masters and doctorate in international relations from Princeton University, has been encouraging the Army officer corps to take greater advantage of officer education programs at civilian universities (General Officer Management). General Petraeus makes a strong case for officers to seek educational opportunities beyond their "cloistered existence," a metaphor he assimilated from a previous mentor, General Jack Galvin. He contends that civilian graduate schooling will move officers outside of their intellectual comfort zones, producing flexible, adaptable, creative thinkers. This experience will expose leaders to a greater diversity and divergence of viewpoints than they experience within their own ranks and also instill a valuable sense of "intellectual humility" (GEN Petraeus).

The Army is about the business of growing "pentathletes" with the intellectual capital, experience and flexibility required to perform effectively across the broad spectrum of conflict. Carried further, this line of reasoning would support the development of strategies that seek officer candidates from universities well-reputed for diverse thought reflective of divergent thinking – especially on topics pertinent to military matters and national defense. In other words, the Army should expand recruiting efforts at schools outside its "intellectual comfort zone" and place a higher value on these target schools.

While the military must always look outward for ways to bolster quality in its leadership, the society it serves does not necessarily or uniformly embrace military service, especially when it comes to encouraging its own children and those closest to them in their communities to serve. Military service is a shared social responsibility that deserves contributions from all segments of

society. Despite the fact that only a fraction of one percent of the population currently serves (1.3 million on active duty and 1.1 million in the National Guard and Reserve forces (US Department of Defense)), it is important that military service not be relegated to a narrow social or geographic segment of the population. “Absent broad representation from all strata of our society, the military, and the wars our soldiers fight, can remain a fantasy, virulently and easily decried” (Herzlinger 1).

A quick historical review of military experience amongst members of Congress reveals a continuing downward trend (Table 1). The Congressional body that approved the current military action in Iraq collectively had only one child serving in the enlisted ranks and a few serving as officers (Rangel). A Duke University study points out what happens when civilian decision makers lack military experience: A review of US foreign policy over nearly two centuries shows that when we have the fewest number of veterans in leadership and staff positions in Congress and the executive branch, we are more likely to engage in aggressive war fighting and we are more likely to pull out of conflicts early (Roth-Douquet). Northwestern University sociologist Dr. Charles Moskos explains that it is only when society’s “elites are viewed as self-sacrificing” that the general citizenry will accept significant hardship. Hence, people living in a democracy are not willing to sustain lengthy military engagements if the leadership class does not serve in the armed forces (Moskos A22). After decades without conscription, “the ignorance of American elites about the military has deepened” (Ricks).

Table 1. Declining Military Experience in Congress

	1991	1995	1999	2003	2005	2007
Senate	68%	56%	43%	35%	31%	29%
House	48%	37%	31%	27%	25%	23%

Military Officers Association of America

The widening civil-military gap is not a new phenomenon. For much of our history, the US military has had "the outlook of an estranged minority" (Huntington 268). In their book “AWOL – The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes from the Military – and How it Hurts Our Country,” Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer reveal painful, personal accounts from their own elite social circles that illustrate this growing divide in America: "From the earliest days of my marriage, people said little things, questions probing how it could happen that

someone like my husband so smart, so versatile ended up in the military," writes Mrs. Roth-Douquet, a former Clinton White House and Pentagon appointee, now married to a Marine Corps officer (Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer 35). "Said one mother to me, 'I've raised my sons to be sensitive to others and to be critical thinkers, so I don't think they'd be well-suited for the military'" (Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer 29). "We should carefully evaluate what went wrong," a head-shaking Brown University history professor said when Mr. Schaeffer's son, John, joined the Marines (Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer 34). In October of 2006, Senator John Kerry commented to a group of California students that those unable to navigate this country's education system "get stuck in Iraq." What may be a phenomenon borne of simple ignorance, now seems to have taken on a more troubling tone of antipathy.

Mutual distrust between the nation's political elites and military leaders could ultimately undercut American foreign policy, making it more difficult to use force effectively (Ricks). Many in uniform take comfort in recent Harris Interactive opinion polls that place the Armed Services at the apex of institutional trust (Harris Interactive). More respondents had a "great deal of confidence" in the people running the military than all other institutions, edging out small business, universities, the Supreme Court, medicine and organized religion (Hill). Nearly five times as many Americans have a "great deal of confidence" in military leaders than they do in Congressional leaders (Hill). However, there is still cause for concern as other polling indicates that civilian leaders without military experience have the lowest opinion of the military (of all groups surveyed) as part of a comprehensive Triangle Institute of Security Studies' project. Only about one third of the leadership class had a "great deal of confidence" in the military (Feaver and Kohn 61). Several scholars highlight the possibility that when this condition exists, the civilian government might not be willing to trust the advice or reports of a military whose values differ so markedly from their own (Cohn 4-5). We may have caught a glimpse of just such an occurrence when General Petraeus was rebuked during his recent testimony to The Senate Armed Service Committee by Senator Hillary Clinton when she stated "I think that the reports that you provide to us really require the willing suspension of disbelief" (transcript).

Table 2. Current Confidence in Leaders of Institutions

"As far as people in charge of running are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

Base: All Adults

		Great Deal	Only Some	Hardly Any	Not Sure/ Refused
The military	%	47	38	14	1
Small business	%	45	47	6	1
Major educational institutions such as colleges and universities	%	38	50	11	1
The US Supreme Court	%	33	50	16	1
Medicine	%	31	49	18	1
Organized religion	%	30	46	24	*
The White House	%	25	37	37	*
Public schools	%	22	52	25	*
The courts and the justice system	%	21	54	25	*
Television news	%	19	56	25	*
Wall Street	%	15	56	24	5
The press	%	14	51	34	*
Major companies	%	13	62	25	*
Organized labor	%	12	54	32	2
Congress	%	10	56	33	1
Law firms	%	10	56	32	2

Harris Interactive Poll #22, 2 March 2006

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

* Less than 0.5%.

According to several scholars, another important facet of the current “gap” dilemma revolves around specific military attitudes that appear to be emerging. “The divide is especially troubling because the military has developed contempt for the society it is supposed to protect” (Cohn 12-13). The military requires and depends on a distinct brand of institutional culture but

must also maintain a deep and abiding connection with the society it serves. Lindsay Cohn points out that the root of the problem may be that “the military is self-selecting, making the cultural divide self-perpetuating” (Cohn 12). In 1994, Richard Kohn, former Chief of the Office of Air Force History stated that, “The military is more alienated from its civilian leadership than at any time in American history – and more vocal about it” (Kohn 3). Based on a survey of 4,000 “prominent citizens” that included a significant number of senior officers, Ole Holsti concluded that “Members of the American military are becoming increasingly partisan, and...also are significantly more Republican and conservative than civilians holding comparable leadership positions” (Holsti). Two-thirds of all officers interviewed described themselves as Republican – twice the percentage of that in 1976 – when more than half identified themselves as independent or non-political. In a more recent survey, only three percent of officers said they were “somewhat liberal” compared to 30 percent for their civilian counterparts (Holsti). The overwhelming evidence of the social and political divergence of the Army’s leadership from society must be considered and weighed to best inform any decision that expands strategic recruiting efforts for elite undergraduates. The potentially dangerous trend towards the politicization of the officer corps over the past several decades could be at least partially addressed and countered through tailored officer accession strategies.

There is also a telling geographic component of the civil-military gap phenomenon. Prior to World War I (in 1910), the South was disproportionately represented in the ranks of senior officers – some 90% of Army generals had a “southern affiliation” (Janowitz 88). “Before World War II, the majority of military posts were located in the South and in the West” (Janowitz 176). Even today, according to Pentagon statistics, the South generates about 40 percent of all Army officers (Jaffe). The most recent cycle of military migration from urban centers in the Northeast to the South and Southwest began again in earnest in the late 1960’s coincident with sweeping national malaise attributed to the Vietnam War. Also contributing to the post-Vietnam migration trend were the repeated rounds of Base Realignment and Closures. These closings have magnified the unintended side effect of increasing the “geographic and political isolation” of the military hastening our return to pre-World War II conditions (Ricks).

Army migration trends away from urban centers in the Northeast have also increased the difficulty of sustaining ethnic diversity, especially for officers. The Army understandably expends considerable effort attempting to achieve broad ethnic diversity to best reflect the fabric

of the society it serves. Officer accession programs are regularly monitored for their performance in this regard. Recently, the Army has struggled to “build an officer corps that takes full advantage of America's multiethnic society” (Jaffe). In a recent interview, General Jack Keane, former Army Vice Chief of Staff, acknowledged that “we’ve been very short-sighted”...and “have leaders in the Army who are uncomfortable in big urban areas. They feel awkward there” (Jaffe). Greg Jaffe contends that the Army is culturally out of synch with the people it is trying to recruit. “We want to produce an officer corps that is fully reflective of the rich ethnicity and cultural diversity of our country,” says Major General Montague Winfield, who commands the Army's ROTC Program. But, he says, the Army must also focus its money and personnel on areas that are likely to produce the largest number of high-quality officers at the least cost to taxpayers (Jaffe). Over the past two decades, the Army has cut roughly a quarter of its Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, with the deepest cuts coming from inner city schools. The Army continues to focus more of its recruitment efforts on the rural South (“Disparity of ROTC”). New York City has only two remaining ROTC Programs while Chicago and Miami have only one ROTC program. Detroit, with its large Muslim population, has none (Disparity of ROTC). It stands to reason that the Army may have to take deliberate, purposeful and maybe even painful measures if it hopes to broaden the social, cultural, racial, political, and geographic diversification of its officer corps.

Historically, ROTC has served as the single largest commissioning source for the United States Army, typically producing more than 60 percent of the active duty second lieutenants (US Fed News). The Army’s ROTC Program has always been influenced by fluctuations in the attitudes and sentiment of the American population with deep roots extending all the way back to the Civil War. Federally funded officer training programs flourished when conditions demanded that the nation unify to support major wars. The Morrill Act of 1862, that established the “land grant” colleges, first established federally-funded officer training at the college level. The federal government required that the land grant schools include military tactics as part of their curriculum, forming what would later become the Army ROTC Program with the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916 (Sons of Union). During both the World War I and II eras, across all socio-economic demographics, colleges and universities boasted large numbers of uniformed students much in consonance with the spirit of the nation at war. In 1917, the Harvard Crimson reported that 1,000 undergraduates were ready to enlist in the ROTC Program, “including

students from the law school, other graduate schools, and even members of the faculty” (Wisse). A quote from a Harvard editorial lauded the school’s vigorous support of military service during that period of international crisis: “That Harvard is the first University to adopt an intensive system of training officers should not be a matter of pride, but rather a basis for the hope that other colleges will establish the same system, and that the foundations of a great citizen army will be laid among our young men” (Wisse). Paul Kennedy, a political science professor at Yale, stated that “During World War II, everybody at Yale was in uniform. We were a military camp” (Kutner). In 1956, Stanford University had 1,100 students enrolled in ROTC (Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer). In 1957, 400 of 750 Princeton men served in the military (Herzlinger 1). During the 1950s, more than half of the graduating classes at Harvard joined the military service and many of them were not drafted (Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer).

During our country’s more recent history (from 1968 to 1974), either by necessity or convenience, the Army closed a total of 43 ROTC programs in the Northeast and opened 45 new programs in the South (Ricks). The backlash of the Vietnam War and the draft was directly felt on campuses across the country. As part of this movement, the vast majority of America’s elite schools banned ROTC. Ruth Wisse contends that when the draft ended in 1973, the academic community and the military should have issued a call “that democracy will henceforth depend on the readiness of the best and the brightest to volunteer for duty. Instead, faculties shaped by the antiwar movement drove ROTC and its recruiters from the campuses” (Wisse). Within the constraints of limited resources, the Army had few practical alternatives to resist its ouster from many universities. The Army was forced to move where it could attract a large enough applicant pool to reliably fill the all-volunteer force with sufficient numbers of lieutenants. Later, during the early 1990s, the trend continued while the Army was downsizing. As part of the Cold War’s “peace dividend,” the Army closed yet another 70 ROTC programs (Ricks).

“Restoring our Army is more than a numbers game. It's also about the quality of its uniformed leadership. In my nearly four decades in uniform, I learned that a well-educated, technologically savvy, culturally aware officer corps is an indispensable prerequisite for military success in the global security environment we face – especially since 9/11.”

Lieutenant General Daniel W. Christman

"No one benefits more from the freedoms that the military defends than academics, who use the freedoms of expression more liberally than the average American. It seems particularly reprehensible for us to free ride as completely as we do."

Gregory Mankiw, Professor of Economics – Harvard College

How can the Army regain a foothold at our most elite universities? A closer analysis of the current situation considers why these students are so desirable and examines dominant forces preventing expanded recruiting at these schools. The following analysis will foster the development of recommendations for overcoming significant economic, social, cultural and political resistance in attracting the best and brightest students to serve in the leadership ranks of the Army.

"Princeton in the nation's service and in the service of all nations"

Princeton University's Motto

What is an "elite" university? Any discussion of comparative *quality* of undergraduate institutions is fraught with personal risk. People tend to be emotionally invested and highly sensitive as a result of their collective personal experience, both as former students and later as parents. The college application and acceptance process is arduous and as coldly unforgiving as any right of passage in our society. Many students are told for the first time in their lives that they are not good enough or that they did not measure up. The inevitable rejection that comes as an inherent part of the college application process is heart-wrenching for many families. Good parents intervene, rationalize, and prop up the deflated spirits, morale and self esteem of rejected children. However, despite the widespread drama, it is hard to argue against the simple, basic premise that some schools are simply better than others and similarly, some students are simply more desirable than others. If all students and academic institutions were created equally, then a national lottery would suffice to determine the fate of nearly two million high school seniors each year.

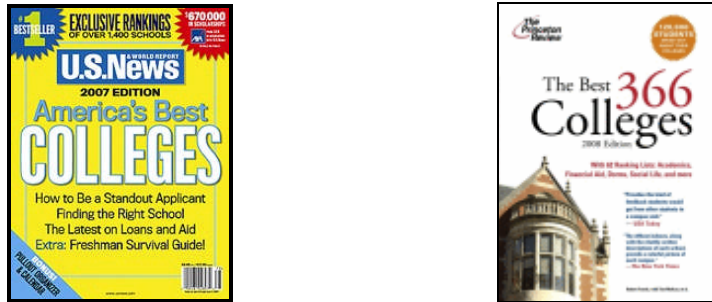


Figure 1. Nation’s Leading College Ranking Publications

The most widely publicized and prominent national college rankings are published annually by *U.S. News and World Report*. This report’s popularity warrants the publication of a special issue entitled “America’s Best Colleges” – always a top seller for the publisher. The *Princeton Review*, another influential enterprise conducting collegiate rankings, publishes an annual review of the nation’s top colleges, reporting the top 20 schools across 62 categories, based on feedback from more than 120,000 students (Franek et al.). However, the *Princeton Review* does not include a comprehensive, single ranking for colleges, thus avoiding most of the sharp criticism that is typically directed at the *U.S. News and World Report*’s annual ranking. Any college ranking system will inevitably be controversial due to the fact that there can never be a universally-accepted, objective methodology to accomplish what is essentially a subjective task.

U.S. News and World Report employs the following methodology to develop its annual ranking of America’s best colleges (Table 3):

Table 3. *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking Methodology

FACTOR	WEIGHT	DESCRIPTION
Peer Assessment	25 %	The <i>U.S. News</i> ranking formula gives greatest weight to the opinions of those in a position to judge a school's undergraduate academic excellence (e.g., presidents, provosts, and deans of admissions). A peer assessment survey was taken of over 2,000 respondents.
Retention	20 %	This measure has two components: six-year (or less) graduation rate and freshman retention rate.
Faculty Resources	20 %	The model benefits schools with a large proportion of classes with fewer than 20 students and a small proportion of large classes. The model considers faculty salary (average faculty pay, plus benefits adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living). Other factors include: proportion of professors with the highest degree in their fields, student-faculty ratio, and proportion of faculty who are full time.
Student Selectivity	15 %	Evaluates test scores of enrollees on the Critical Reading and Math portions of the SAT or Composite ACT score; the proportion of enrolled freshmen who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes; and the acceptance rate (the ratio of students admitted to applicants).
Financial Resources	10 %	The model totals the school's spending per student for instruction, research, student services, and related educational expenditures....only the part of a school's budget that goes toward educating students.
Graduation Rate	5 %	Measures the difference between a school's six-year (or less) graduation rate and the predicted graduation rate.
Alumni Giving	5 %	The average percentage of living alumni who gave to their school.

"Best College Rankings" U.S. News and World Report - America's Best Colleges - 2008 Online Edition

The *U.S. News and World Report* 2008 annual ranking identifies Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Stanford (in that order) as the top four schools in the country. These four schools consistently remain atop the national rankings over time. Since these schools have held their relative rankings most consistently among the top five, they were selected to help confine the focus for the following analysis and discussion. The author acknowledges that this analytic decision of convenience imposes an arbitrary “cut-line” that has no other basis than simplification to suit the purposes of streamlining this research product.

A quick glance at Army ROTC output at these top four schools is disappointing. The following table provides the paltry number of graduates receiving active duty commissions in the US Army over the past three years and includes projections for the next four years. A total of just

four ROTC cadets (less than one tenth of one percent of the graduating classes) will be commissioned in the Army this year from our nation’s four best schools. Of these four schools, only Princeton has a resident (embedded) ROTC program. Yale does not have a single cadet in any class with an Army ROTC scholarship.

Table 4. Army ROTC “Production” – *Past and Projected*

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Princeton	9	8	7	2	5	-	-
Harvard	-	-	1	2	6	5	1
Yale	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Stanford	-	-	1	0	1	1	1

“dash (-)” indicates information not available

(Various Government Sources)

Why make the effort? The Army manages to put well-qualified, patriotic lieutenants in front of platoons no matter how tough the recruiting environment gets. In recent years ROTC has struggled, falling well short of meeting its quota of lieutenants. This trend began several years before the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. In testimony to the Armed Services Subcommittee for Personnel, in March of 1999, the Army’s Chief of Staff for Personnel reported that ROTC was not achieving its accession goals for that fiscal year and projected similar “difficulties” in meeting future years’ goals (Ohle and Henry 9). In order to offset the impending ROTC shortfall, the Army increased the Officer Candidate School’s (OCS) mission by nearly 50 percent. OCS is a 14-week commissioning program that accepts 60 to 70 percent of applicants from the Army’s enlisted ranks or directly from college (civilians). Historically, OCS graduation rates average about 90 percent (Powers). In 2008, for the first time since the Vietnam War, the Army will commission more officers through its OCS Program than it will through ROTC (unnamed Government source). The Army continues to meet its officer accession numbers despite a declining pool of willing collegiate candidates. However, there are still many good reasons to make the extraordinary effort necessary to recruit at our nation’s elite schools. Beyond the welcomed addition of some exceptionally bright and accomplished people, there is a powerful symbolic message for our nation in reversing the ever-narrowing demographic trends that are shrinking the base of the Army officer corps.

The US Labor Department reports that about 1.6 million out of 2.5 million high school graduates enroll in college (College Enrollment and Work). A very small, competitive, self-selecting subset of these college-bound students applies to top-tier schools. Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Stanford collectively received 85,178 applications for less than 6,000 freshmen seats in the class of 2011 (Stats for Class). The average acceptance rate for these schools is 9.5 percent and, on average, 73 percent of those accepted enroll at one of these schools (Franek et al. 271, 413, 503 and 783). Not surprisingly, these are the four lowest acceptance rates in the country. Further, students offered admission to these schools are more likely to accept and enroll than at all other schools in the country. In 2007, a combined total of 5,952 students enrolled at these four schools with about nine percent of the students coming from other countries. So for the pool of 1.6 million college-bound high school seniors, only one third of one percent will attend one of the top four schools. This fierce competition will only get stiffer as more of the children of the Baby Boom Generation, known as the “Echo Boomers,” come of college age.

Table 5. “Top 4” Statistics for the Class of 2011

	Enrolled	Accepted	Applied	Rate
Princeton	1,246	1,791	18,942	9.46%
Harvard	1,684	2,058	22,955	8.97%
Yale	1,300	1,860	19,323	9.62%
Stanford	1,722	2,464	23,958	10.28%

(Hernandez College Consulting and respective university admissions offices)

America’s elite students are diverse, talented, competitive, ambitious, energetic, and success-oriented beyond imagination. The average minority population at these schools is greater than 50 percent (Franek et al. 270, 412, 502 and 782). Stanford University boasts the highest level of diversity (non-Caucasian) at 60 percent, including students from 68 countries (Franek et al. 502). Last year at Harvard, 3,000 valedictorians applied; 2,500 applicants scored a perfect 800 on the critical reading; and 3,200 applicants scored a perfect 800 on the math section of the SAT (Stats for Class). “Yale rejected several applicants with perfect 2400 scores on the three part

SAT, and Princeton turned away thousands of high school applicants with 4.0 grade point averages" (Competition for Ivy League, 1). Each year, several of these schools renew their boast of *achieving* their lowest acceptance rates ever. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation awards 2,500 National Merit Scholarships (NMS) each year. In 2007, more than 60 percent of these coveted scholarships were awarded to students attending these top four schools (College Confidential). The Ivy League schools are recognized in 33 men's and women's sports with each school fielding at least 35 teams. Stanford University has won a total of 108 national championships, capturing NCAA titles "at an unprecedented rate, including 78 since 1980, 55 since 1990, and 19 since 2000, all national bests" (GoStanford.com). Although there is no clear "recipe" for gaining admittance, successful students held leadership positions in student government; participated extensively in community service; took three to six Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; speak two or more languages; play a musical instrument; traveled abroad on academic and service-oriented projects; captained varsity sports teams; and spent summers rounding out their already bulging resumes. These are the scholars, athletes, and leaders that have industry drooling.

Not only are these students the most competitive undergraduates in the country, they move on, as one might expect, to fill the seats at the nation's best graduate schools. "For years the focus in higher education has been about getting into the best possible college. Yet when it comes to professionals – the future doctors, lawyers and executives out there – it's all about the right grad school" (Bernstein). Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Stanford were ranked by the *Wall Street Journal* as the top four "feeder" colleges for America's best graduate schools (Bernstein). Harvard, Yale, and Princeton graduates alone fill 20 percent of the limited seats at the top 15 graduate programs across the country (Bernstein). (*U.S. News and World Report ranked Harvard and Stanford as America's top graduate schools based on their performance in categories such as: average starting salary for graduates, percentage of employment after graduation, and selectivity*). A large percentage of elite undergraduates select their colleges with the longer-term objective of attending one of the best graduate schools. As a result, the real "worth" of their diplomas is largely measured against graduate school acceptance rates. After receiving world-class graduate educations, these students demand hefty salary premiums and handsome signing bonuses as they join the global work force (Best College Rankings).

Elite graduates leverage powerful business and social networks sponsored by their academic institutions. These elite institutions breed an enduring, almost tribal brand of cohesiveness that begins early on with the emotional application and acceptance rituals. The alumni associations are well funded, powerful and active in transitioning graduates into desirable jobs. A look at the American Presidency supports these viewpoints at the highest level of global power and influence. John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy graduated from Harvard. James Madison and Woodrow Wilson graduated from Princeton while John F. Kennedy started at Princeton, and later transferred to Harvard. William Taft, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush graduated from Yale. Herbert Hoover graduated from Stanford. Rutherford Hayes, Gerald Ford, Bill Clinton, John F. Kennedy and George W. Bush received advanced degrees from Harvard, Yale or Stanford (Presidents). This trend among the powerful and influential continues. For example, several of the prominent presidential candidates competing in the 2008 primaries share a common pedigree with past American presidents. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney have each earned at least one degree from Harvard or Yale. These universities also dominate leadership on the global business stage. The School of Mines in Paris produced a highly publicized ranking of the top 338 global academic institutions in 2007. They looked at the “Global Fortune 500” and awarded points to schools based on the number of alumni holding a Chief Executive Officer position (CEO) in one of these world-renowned companies. Harvard received the top rating, Stanford was third and Yale was eleventh despite the fact that these schools have extremely small comparative enrollment numbers (Professional Rankings of World). It stands to reason that the Army should expect to pay a premium for graduates from universities that cultivate and develop this caliber of leadership potential.

Numerous barriers prevent fruitful recruiting at America’s top schools. The most often cited explanations tend to identify shortcomings of the schools and even the paucity of militarily desirable undergraduates. Many lay the blame squarely on discriminatory, antimilitary attitudes prevalent among the faculty at elite schools. Lieutenant General David Christman, former Superintendent of the US Military Academy, attributes the ROTC ban on a “deep-seated, anti-military resentment among many faculty members at top-tier universities” based on his personal experience serving on an ROTC advisory board at an elite university. The schools, on the other hand, will often blame the military for the “discriminatory” policy of “don’t ask don’t tell” which

Lieutenant General Christman describes as a “charade” and conveniently repeated mantra stemming from the “mindless attacks on our military in the 1960s and 1970s” (Christman). He believes the policy is recognized by most adults as a reasonable compromise that allows gays to serve. “If that policy were changed tomorrow (and it will not be), other justifications – an “unjust war,” the military’s “unfair burden on the poor” – would conveniently take its place” (Christman). Others believe elite students are overly self-indulgent with no predisposition to serve their country. This explains the “*Who needs them anyway?*” attitude that often circulates within the Army.

Rather than focusing on forces beyond the Army’s direct control, such as indefensible ROTC bans and alleged negative faculty attitudes, a useful analysis should develop actionable plans that the Army can implement independently to remedy this troubling situation. In other words, this analysis needs to answer the question “How can the Army better compete for these students?” This appropriately places the burden on the Army to enhance its appeal to an untapped pool of premium officer candidates attending these schools. If commissioning statistics are the defining metric, the Army is currently not competing well for these prized students.

Financial considerations shed the most light on why the Army is failing in this endeavor. Table 5 (below) shows the national average for the *total* cost of attending college in 2006 and 2007. Table 6 shows the national average for the *net* cost of attending college over the same two years after subtracting out scholarships and tax benefits.

Table 6. Average Total Cost of College
(tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, and transportation)

	2006	2007
Community college (living at home)	\$4,319	\$4,552
In-state public university	\$14,618	\$15,488
Private university	\$32,024	\$34,063

College Board – “A Costly Cap and Gown” (Clark)

Table 7. Average Net Cost of College after Scholarships and Tax Benefits
(tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, and transportation)

	2006	2007
Community college (living at home)	\$2,347	\$2,511
In-state public university	\$11,412	\$11,879
Private university	\$23,777	\$24,756

College Board – “A Costly Cap and Gown” (Clark)

These statistics provide a baseline against which useful financial comparisons can be made. The Army offers a full, four-year tuition scholarship for ROTC students (without cap) at Harvard, Yale, Stanford and Princeton. On top of the tuition scholarship, ROTC cadets generally receive a small stipend for books and fees. At Stanford University, for example, Army ROTC cadets (assigned to the “Bronco Battalion” at Santa Clara University) receive total scholarship funding of about \$38,000 per year (ROTC Staff). These cadets then must cover the remaining bill for room, board and meals, totaling \$10,367 (Franek et al. 503). Although the total amounts vary slightly between schools, this example is reasonably comparable to the other three schools. So the good news is that ROTC cadets at these top four schools, on average, will pay slightly less than a student at an “average” public university and less than half of what a student pays at the “average” private university. However, a closer look dampens some of the initial enthusiasm.

Harvard, Yale, Stanford and Princeton are the four “wealthiest” schools in the country, as measured by total endowment divided by total number of undergraduate students (Wolff). These schools have between two and three million dollars of endowment per undergraduate student (Gravelle 3). As of October of 2007, Harvard’s endowment reached \$34.9 billion; Yale’s \$22.5 billion; Stanford’s \$17.2 billion; and Princeton’s \$15.8 billion. In 2007, these four schools earned impressive annual endowment returns of 23, 28, 23, and 19.5 percent, respectively (Wolff). Since these sizable investment returns are largely generated through tax-free, off-shore investments, lawmakers are beginning to scrutinize financial aid programs and federal funding levels for these extremely affluent schools. In September of 2007, during testimony to the Senate Finance Committee, an economic specialist from the Congressional Research Service

stated that despite unprecedented endowment growth, Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton paid out only one half of one percent of their endowments in financial aid while Yale only paid one third of one percent (Gravelle 3). So by increasing total aid by only a fraction of one percent of total endowment, these schools could double their financial aid profiles and still bank double-digit returns on their investments.

As a result of this incomparable institutional wealth, these schools offer the very best financial bargains for students. They consistently top the *U.S. News and World Report's* rankings for "Best-Value" schools. Harvard has recently capped tuition for families with income as high as \$180,000 to only ten percent of their earnings (Clark). In February of 2008, Stanford announced that all students with combined parental income of under \$100,000 would receive full tuition scholarships (Rubenstein). Currently at Stanford, a full 75 percent of students receive financial aid, averaging \$32,413 per student (College Board). Well over half of the undergraduates at our four elite schools receive need-based financial aid with the average aid packages exceeding 63 percent of the total costs ("Best College Rankings"). All four schools meet 100 percent of all students' "demonstrated financial need." The average cost, after scholarships, ranges between \$15,647 and \$18,986 for these schools ("Best College Rankings"). This cost is a full 40 percent below the net cost for the average private university. Further, these students graduate with an average debt load of only \$10,600 ("Best College Rankings"). This compares favorably against the national median for student indebtedness which has hovered around \$20,000 over the past four years (various).

So although the Army is currently offering a seemingly generous \$38,000 per year for an ROTC cadet at Stanford, that same student would receive \$32,413 (for 2007-08) from Stanford if she decided not to join ROTC (College Board). Since all outside scholarships reduce Stanford's financial aid package on a one-to-one basis, ROTC cadets are only entitled to the difference between the two offers. Hence, the net difference, or financial incentive to join Army ROTC while attending Stanford, is only \$5,587 per year. Stanford's promise to increase financial aid substantially next year will boost total aid by an additional \$5,000 to \$10,000 per student thus eliminating any nominal financial incentive a student might have had to join ROTC (Rubenstein). By necessity, Harvard, Yale and Princeton continue to remain competitive with each other, offering comparably generous aid packages. These schools cannot afford to fall out of line in this area or they risk reducing their enrollment rates ("yield") – a key factor in

quantifying the schools' desirability. The Army has long recognized that various financial incentives are effective in attracting and retaining enlisted and officer alike. ROTC itself is a scholarship program in the purest sense. Hefty retention bonuses, recently \$35,000, were paid to retain Captains to prevent large numbers from leaving during the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. The Army just initiated a pilot program in five cities offering enlistees up to \$40,000 for a five-year enlistment. This money will be paid out after the enlistment term to make a down-payment on a home or to help start a business ("Army Testing Advantage Fund Incentives"). If the current market requires \$40,000 to attract a high school graduate and \$35,000 to retain a mid-grade officer, then it is plainly obvious that the Army will not lure the most highly sought college students in America for an incentive package amounting to a few thousand dollars a year.

Most of the nation's top-tier schools have expelled ROTC, so many ROTC cadets must attend classes off campus at other schools in their area. ROTC cadets at Yale attend military classes at Sacred Heart (18 miles away); Stanford at Santa Clara (18 miles away); and Harvard at nearby MIT. ROTC duties away from their home campuses require 6 to 25 hours per week, depending on a cadet's seniority and leadership responsibilities (Sado). These time estimates do not account for inter-campus travel or the fact that most undergraduates do not own a car. Some cadets travel to other campuses as many as three to four days a week (Sado). Surprisingly, ROTC duties are not the primary complaint of these energetic, dedicated cadets. They often report that it is not an unpleasant task for them because they feel very good about what they are doing. Rather, they are most discouraged that they spend the bulk of their week competing with the top students in the world while being substantially handicapped by the numerous inconveniences imposed by "satellite" ROTC arrangements. Making it worse, their ROTC efforts are not honored by their respective academic departments. While Harvard, Yale and Stanford generously award credits for such classes as *Hip Hop Dance*, *Yoga*, and *Running Club*, displaced ROTC cadets receive no academic credit for a curriculum that includes rigorous courses in Military Science and Leadership.

The Army must now make a choice at a defining moment in its history. The Army can decide to do nothing and continue on the current path, evolving as a separate and distinct class of officers from the broader society it serves. This will involve continuation of the current trend of increased officer accession from a narrowing segment of the population – a segment that conspicuously resembles the demographic composition of the Army's current leadership. The

Army could alternatively choose to expand the base of the officer corps in order to bolster leadership quality and diversity, meeting the demands of the post 9/11 security environment.

“Many proposals have been presented for maintaining the quality of the force, but if none of those works, we may not know until it is too late. The executive branch, Congress, the Armed Forces, and indeed the American population need to look now at the type of military we want for the future and the price we are willing to pay to ensure our national security.”

Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli

The time is right to substantially improve recruiting yields at our elite universities. A winning strategy to accomplish this does not necessitate the expenditure of vast resources. On the contrary, this can be accomplished at a significantly lower total cost per officer candidate than we currently spend for a West Point graduate. According to a Government Accounting Office report, the total cost (total operating cost of the academy divided by the number of graduates) of a four-year West Point education was \$349,327 in 2002 (GAO). Everything else held equal, annual inflation easily increases this estimate to more than \$400,000 for the class of 2011. Despite this significant investment, the US Military Academy is producing officers that are leaving the service at alarming rates upon completion of their initial, five-year service obligation. According to statistics compiled by West Point, 46 percent of the class of 2001 (415 of 903) left the service during 2006 – their first year of eligibility (Bender). These figures reflect the lowest retention rates (except during deliberate down-sizing years) for West Point officers since 1977 (Bender). In order to stem the tide, the Army has offered West Point cadets various incentives to improve retention. Cadets are now offered guaranteed assignments to the home bases of their choice and the opportunity to attend graduate school at the government’s expense for a promise to extend their initial term of service by three years. These incentives have been widely embraced by cadets in the first iteration of this new program.

Andrew J. Bacevich contends that the government ought to be *"creating mechanisms that will reawaken in privileged America a willingness to serve"* (Benson).

Recommendations:

- 1.) First and foremost, the Army's senior leadership must support the decision to compete for elite college graduates. Without this critical buy-in, any well-intentioned strategy will eventually fail.
- 2.) This program should be independently funded and managed through the Army's Recruiting Command, offering maximum flexibility to those charged with implementing the program.
- 3.) The Army should offer recruited students the following incentives package:
 - a. A monetary sum at least equal to the listed cost of their four-year education (approximately \$208,000 in base year 2008 dollars) without any reductions for financial aid, scholarships or grants.
 - b. A guaranteed opportunity to attend graduate school at the government's expense upon completion of the initial term of service. Officers attending graduate school would incur an increased service obligation.
 - c. A guaranteed assignment in the branch of choice.
 - d. A guaranteed assignment at a home base of choice.
- 4.) In return, candidates must commit to a five-year, initial term of service.
- 5.) The Army should begin recruiting these students during their senior year of college.
- 6.) Officer candidates would be sent to Fort Benning, Georgia to complete pre-commissioning and officer basic training.

Implementing these challenging recommendations will require flexibility and perseverance, because they require significant change in an arena that has long been the province of Cadet Command. The ROTC paradigm is clearly not working well at the nation's best schools, necessitating the development of a new paradigm if the Army commits to improving the current state of affairs. This program must be presented as a win-win for all stakeholders to avoid possible turf issues that might arise between Cadet Command and Recruiting Command. The Army will increase diversity, quality and representation by expanding its base in elite academic circles. Cadet Command will eventually be able to shift critical resources away from high-cost, low-yield programs and more appropriately focus on schools that provide a reasonable match for the ROTC Scholarship Program. Recruiting Command will be able to implement this program

with a streamlined management presence, leveraging its existing regional resources already conducting a similar recruiting mission.

One of the toughest challenges will be determining how to smartly initiate the program. In order to mitigate risk, the Army should start slowly by initiating a pilot program with one or two schools that currently do not have an embedded ROTC Program. The few ROTC cadets already attending these schools should be offered the opportunity to terminate their current contracts and transition to this program. The overall transition and growth planning will be best devised and refined as this program gains momentum.

The US Army maintains a long, rich tradition of leading social change that has carried America forward. From nondiscrimination and racial integration to women's rights, the US Army has established policies and programs that have paved the way for sweeping reform and profound national transformation. The Army now has an exciting opportunity to step up and make a bold move to help close the civil military gap, and at the same time, bolster its leadership with an infusion of extremely talented officers.

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